

POLICY-JBC

Related Entries: AC, AC-R, IHB, JICK, JICKA, JB, JBA, JBB, IA, IGA, IHBE
Responsible Office: Superintendent

Equity and Excellence for All Students

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is threefold:

To assert the Board’s commitment to educational excellence for all students by centering equity-based practices and identifying and removing institutional barriers steeped in systemic deficiencies which have perpetuated student opportunity gaps.

To affirm the Board’s unwavering commitment that all students in Las Cruces Public Schools are engaged in a culturally and linguistically responsive educational system that meets students’ social, emotional, and academic needs.

To establish a framework that promotes learning environments that validate and infuse students’ home culture, language, and identity, and affirms our commitment to eliminate the negative stereotypes of historically under-represented and marginalized cultures and languages.

II. BACKGROUND

The Las Cruces Public School Board is committed to the success of every student and to the mission of providing an equitable, student-centered learning environment that cultivates civic engagement, promotes excellence, and celebrates diversity. We believe that the responsibility for student success is broadly shared by all district staff, families and our local community. We are focused on closing opportunity gaps and creating learning communities that provide support and academic enrichment programs for all students.

The Board acknowledges that it is critical and urgent to address the need for access to quality programs for under-represented and historically marginalized students in New Mexico. The New Mexico Constitution instructs the State to develop a uniform system of public schools sufficient for the education of all New Mexico students. The Court’s decision and order in the *Martinez* and *Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit held that New Mexico has not met its duty to provide an education to the state’s “at-risk” students, including those who are economically disadvantaged, Native American, English learners, or students with disabilities.

The Board recognizes that educational excellence for all students requires a commitment to equity, which is more than a list of practical strategies. It is a lens and an ideological commitment. There are no practical strategies that will help us develop equitable institutions if we are unwilling to deepen our understandings of equity and inequity (Gorski, 2017). Equity also requires a historically informed critical lens, an ideological commitment to justice, and a set of goals, practices, and mechanisms of accountability.

III. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions are used:

1. ***Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education System***: An educational system where teaching and learning are rooted in the mindset that students' cultures and languages are validated and affirmed for the purpose of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and in the mainstream society (Hollie, 2012).
2. ***Discrimination***: includes intentional or non-intentional actions that are motivated by an invidious intent to target individuals based on their actual or perceived socially constructed identity categories, as well as acts of hate, violence, insensitivity, disrespect, or retaliation – such as verbal abuse, harassment, bullying, slurs, threats, physical violence, vandalism, or destruction of property – that impede or affect the learning. Discrimination encompasses racism, sexism, and other forms of institutional prejudices in all their manifestations.
3. ***Equity***: an interruption of systems, structures, policies, and practices which privilege some students while marginalizing other students. Strategies that promote equity are intended to ensure fairness and justice by the following:
 - a. Countering biased behaviors that cause harm to specific groups
 - b. Opposing unfair policies, programs, and practices that consistently result in negative outcomes for groups who are disadvantaged by these actions
 - c. Negotiating, re-allocating, and sometimes re-imagining resources, opportunities, and supports when equal distribution of these things (one size fits all) results in inequitable outcomes that do not adequately meet specific needs and interests of all groups of students
4. ***Ethnic Studies-infused Education***: Ethnic Studies is an academic field created by grassroots, social justice movements of the 1960s that centered on the struggles of communities experiencing poverty due to their race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and lack of equitable representation in institutions such as education, government, and even public media. Ethnic Studies as a field of inquiry, research, curriculum, and community-centered knowledge production is a partner to Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices. Ethnic Studies provides the historical backdrop that details and explains the need to heal generational traumas through education that is equitable and representative of

populations residing in a particular place within the broader global scheme.

5. ***Socially constructed identity categories***: include race, ethnicity, colorism, ancestry, national origin, religion, immigration status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, family/parental status, marital status, age, physical or mental disability, structural poverty and socioeconomic status, language, or other legally or constitutionally protected attributes or affiliations.

IV. POSITION

To achieve equity and excellence for all LCPS students the Board establishes and/or commits to the following:

1. Establishing that fairness, equity, and inclusion are essential principles of our school system by integrating these principles into resource distribution, policies, programs, operations, and practices.
2. Supporting a teaching and learning culture that includes high and individualized expectations of students and staff, innovative teaching and learning styles as well as systemic supports for teachers and students.
3. Creating multiple learning pathways that widen access to educational opportunities and lifelong success.
4. Ensuring that language used in district guidelines, policies, and/or procedures include words, phrases, and tones that are culturally appropriate and do not discriminate against groups of people based on socially constructed identity categories.
5. Supporting the LCPS Equity Council composed of district staff, school staff, community experts, parents, and students. The Equity Council will serve as an advisory body to the LCPS School Board and administration where they will identify inequities within current policies, practices, or structures and make recommendations to eliminate these inequities. The Equity Council will provide a formal presentation to the LCPS School Board on an annual basis.
6. Providing high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive curricula for students and teachers by, for example, infusing Ethnic Studies into the curriculum.
7. Providing on-going professional development and support to all district administrators, teaching staff, and support staff in order to implement this policy to create culturally affirming and validating classrooms and schools.
8. Engaging with staff, students, parents/guardians, and the local community in order to build and sustain a culture emblematic of the ideals of this policy.

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9. Attending training related to educational equity within one year of the establishment of this policy. Any newly elected Board member will attend training within one year of election. Board members will commit to attending subsequent equity trainings of their choosing offered at the local, state, and national level.
10. Supporting a positive approach to student behavior and the use of preventative and restorative practices to minimize the need for discipline and maximize instructional time for every student.
11. Providing a culturally and linguistically responsive Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum that validates and affirms the home culture and language of students which accurately depicts and represents the distinctive contributions of the local and global communities. The curriculum shall enable staff to implement the development of the following attitudes, skills, and behaviors:
 - a. Valuing one's heritage and the heritage of others.
 - b. Respecting and celebrating diversity as an essential component to the health of a thriving community.
 - c. Valuing the richness of cultural pluralism and commonality.
 - d. Developing and promoting inclusive relationships and foster the ability to work effectively in cross-cultural environments; and
 - e. Confronting and eliminating stereotypes and biases related to individuals' actual or perceived socially constructed identity categories.
 - f. Starting an effort to infuse Ethnic Studies into the K-12 curriculum.
12. Modeling the expectations in this policy and expecting all Board and Las Cruces Public Schools reports, presentations, and decision making to adhere to the equity implications of this policy.
13. Allowing for the submission of inquiries or complaints regarding this policy to be made directly to the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee.

The Superintendent shall promulgate a regulation for the enforcement of this policy.

V. REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in accordance with the Board of Education's review process.

DocuSigned by:

Ray Jaramillo

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Approved, Board of Education, President

April 6, 2021

Date

References: Gorski, P. (2013). *Reaching and teaching students in poverty: strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. New York: Teachers College Press.; Hollie, S. (2012). *Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning: Classroom practices for student success*. Huntington Beach, CA: Shell Education.

History: New policy adopted: 3.6.2021